



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

September 28, 2006

H.R. 4997 **Physicians for Underserved Areas Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on September 27, 2006

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 4997 would result in no significant net cost to the federal government. The bill would affect direct spending, but we estimate that any effects would be insignificant. H.R. 4997 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

Until June 1, 2006, foreign students attending medical school in the United States were permitted to remain after graduation if they agreed to work for at least three years in certain regions of the country considered to be underserved by physicians or if they accepted employment with certain federal agencies. That program was limited to 30 individuals a year for each state that participated in the program. Under current law, such individuals must return to their native countries. H.R. 4997 would reestablish this program through June 1, 2008.

Based on the participation of foreign medical students in those employment programs in recent years, CBO expects that the bill's provisions would affect fewer than 2,000 persons annually. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) would collect fees to provide work permits for those individuals. CIS fees are classified as offsetting receipts (a credit against direct spending). The agency is authorized to spend such fees without further appropriation, so the net impact on CIS spending would be insignificant.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Mark Grabowicz. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.